

Canine Diabetes

Diabetes is a very common hormonal disorder of dogs. Approximately 1 in 200-400 dogs will develop Diabetes Mellitus in their lifetime. Simply put, Diabetes Mellitus is a failure of the pancreatic beta cells to produce insulin which is required to regulate blood sugar. Insulin allows cells to use glucose as energy.

When insulin is deficient, the body becomes starved for a source of energy, so it breaks down fat and protein stores to use as alternative energy sources. As a consequence, the dog eats more, therefore we have weight loss in a dog with a ravenous appetite. The body tries to eliminate the excess glucose in the blood by excreting it in the urine. However, glucose attracts water resulting in the production of a large amount of urine. To avoid dehydration, the dog drinks more and more water.

There is no cure for Diabetes Mellitus. However, once control is attained with proper treatment and homecare, a diabetic dog can live many healthy years.

Insulin

The foundation for regulating blood glucose is administration of insulin by injection under their skin twice daily. The injections can be given at home, at the same time each day. Your veterinarian will show you how to give these injections. The proper type of insulin, dose, and frequency of administration for your dog needs to be determined by your veterinarian. This is based on a blood glucose profile, obtained through a veterinarian-administered insulin injection and subsequent testing of blood sugar levels at regular intervals throughout the day. Insulin dosage is likely to change with time and needs to be adjusted based on new blood glucose profiles, the results of intermittent blood tests and urine sugar measurements, and your dog's response to therapy, as well as any diet or exercise changes.

Diet

Your dog's feeding routine is important and in addition to medication, an important step in treating diabetes is to alter your dog's diet. Ideally, a dog receiving insulin should be fed half it's daily food requirement just before each injection. Diets high in fibre are preferred in dogs because they are generally lower in sugar and slower to be digested, so the body does not have to cope with lots of sugar all at once.

At home, you'll need to be constantly aware of your dog's appetite, weight, water consumption, and urine output. It is important to feed a consistent type of food and amount at the same time each day [12hours intervals], so that you can be aware of days that your dog either does not eat or is unusually hungry after the feeding. Additionally, since water consumption is a key indicator of diabetes, monitoring your dog's water consumption is important.

Diabetes Management Plan

Diet:

Food should be given twice a day at 12 hourly intervals and insulin should be administered shortly after food.

Meals and insulin given at the SAME time every day but not simultaneously

i.e Breakfast at 7am followed by insulin at 7.30am. Dinner at 7pm followed by insulin at 7.30pm

Meal quantity and insulin amount MUST the SAME every day.

Insulin:

_____iu given at _____am and _____pm each day.

Remember to store the insulin in the fridge.

Exercise:

Important to have the SAME amount of exercise every day

Recheck and blood test is due every 6 months (once controlled):

Successfully managing a diabetic dog requires much dedication and communication between you and your veterinarian. We will work with you to try and achieve consistent regulation, but some dogs are difficult to keep regulated. The personal commitment to treating a diabetic dog is significant. The financial commitment is large initially and can increase if problems arise. Because a dog's insulin requirements may change over time, regular checking of blood glucose or serum Fructosamine levels is essential.

As well as coming in for all scheduled rechecks, please contact your vet at the first reappearance of diabetes signs (increased thirst, increased weight loss, increased appetite, or increased urination).

Please call the vet immediately if your pet doesn't eat, is wandering aimlessly, confused, or weak.

Important points for care of a diabetes patient:

- Always have glucose or honey in the house in case you are instructed to give this
- Don't keep insulin in the fridge door, keep in it on the fridge shelf
- Insulin syringes vary depending on the type of insulin they are intended to be used for.
- Only use syringes provided to you by your veterinarian
- One person should be responsible for the administration of insulin to avoid accidental 'double dosing'